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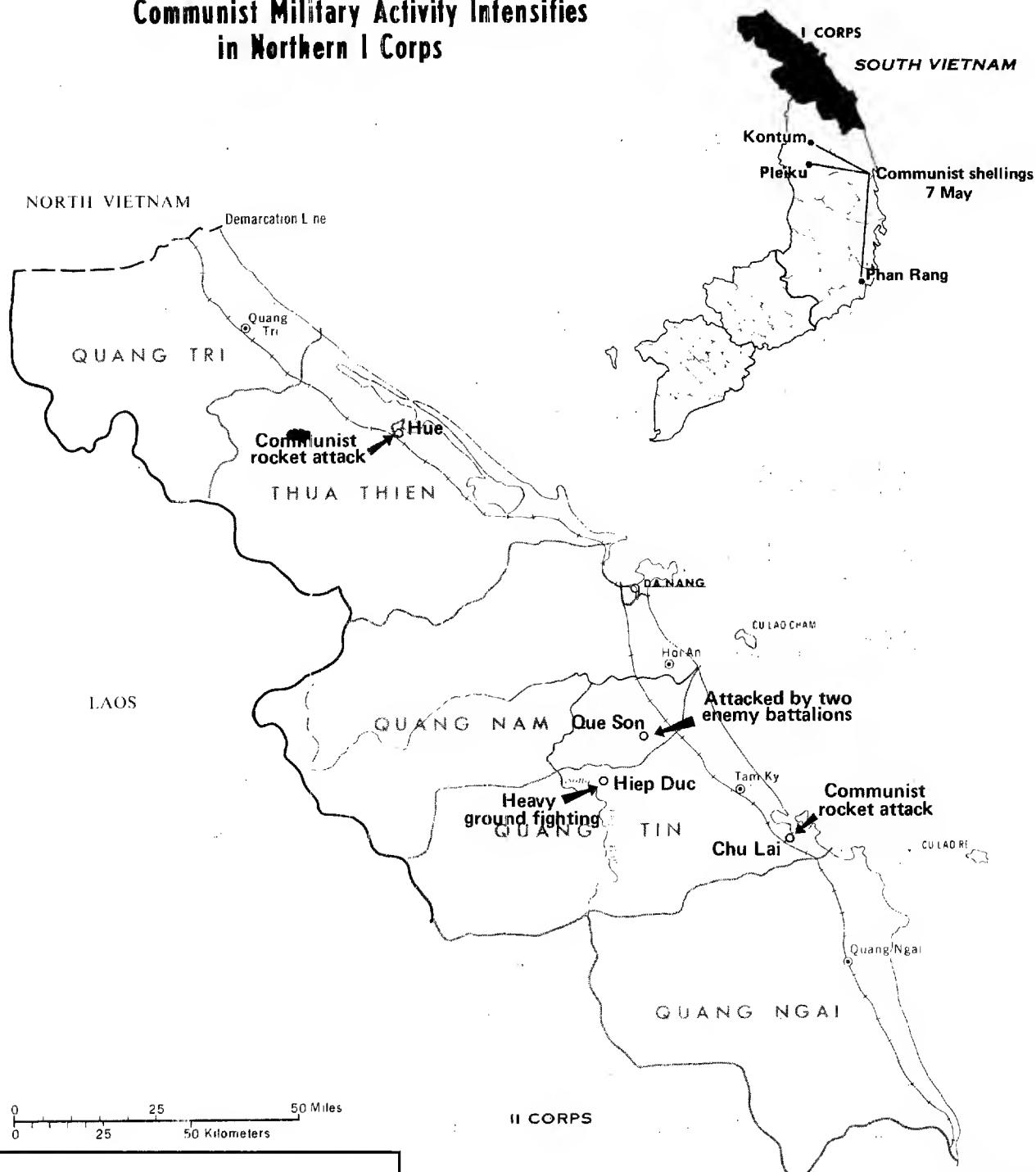
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Communist Military Activity Intensifies in Northern I Corps



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South Vietnam: Communist military activity continues to intensify in the northern provinces of I Corps.

The US facility at Chu Lai was the target of nearly 200 large-caliber rockets early this week. In midweek, an allied artillery base in northern Quang Tri Province was shelled and penetrated by enemy sappers, resulting in 130 allied casualties, including 67 Americans killed and wounded. A nearby South Vietnamese field position and an American artillery base in Thua Thien Province were the targets of 500-round mortar barrages, but only light casualties were reported. Early yesterday, Hue was struck by six rockets; 12 Vietnamese were killed.

Ground fighting was reported heavy yesterday in the vicinity of the refugee resettlement village of Hiep Duc in north-central Quang Tin Province. Elements of two Communist regiments, which had previously overrun and seized most of the village's five hamlets, are being chased back into the mountains, however, and have left some 300 dead behind. In addition, the Que Son district headquarters in Quang Nam Province was attacked by two enemy battalions following a 200-round mortar bombardment. The headquarters was extensively damaged and 12 persons were killed.

The increase in enemy hostilities is expected to continue through the weekend. Many enemy units throughout I Corps are now combat ready and ground attacks as well as mortar and rocket shellings against Da Nang and other major targets may well accompany the anticipated action in the more remote sectors.

Aside from light shellings of the provincial capitals of Kontum, Pleiku, and Phan Rang on 7 May, the level of enemy-initiated activity remained generally low throughout the rest of the country.

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Laos: The Communists appear determined to establish a foothold in the southern portion of the Bolovens Plateau.

Their forces have recaptured the key artillery site overlooking Attopeu town from which they withdrew only the day before. The Communists have also launched rockets at an artillery position about three miles west of this site, but no damage resulted.

Reports from persons who escaped Attopeu indicate that the force which captured the town consisted of two North Vietnamese battalions, but that it is now being held by Pathet Lao units. The government commander responsible for the defense of Attopeu allegedly accepted an enemy offer to abandon the provincial capital without a fight.

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USSR-Czechoslovakia: The friendship treaty signed on 6 May represents the fullest formal endorsement yet of Moscow's claimed right to intervene in any country where Communist rule is threatened.

The 20-year treaty makes it the formal duty of the signatories to take "necessary measures" to protect the gains of socialism. The Soviet leaders expect with this formulation of the "Brezhnev doctrine" to legitimize once and for all the Warsaw Pact's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The treaty also commits the two states to work toward "socialist economic integration" within CEMA, marking the first time this Soviet project has been explicitly incorporated in an accord of this kind. In one other innovation, it obliges the Czechoslovaks to facilitate "direct ties" between the "state organs" and public organizations of Prague and Moscow. This will serve to solidify the hold the Soviets now have over Czechoslovakia.

In not limiting mutual defense obligations to the continent of Europe, the new treaty is similar to pacts concluded in 1967 with Hungary and Bulgaria. In contrast, the provisions of the Warsaw Pact and Moscow's first postwar treaties with Eastern Europe were specifically focused on Europe. The scope of the new treaty, in addition to the reaffirmation of the "Brezhnev doctrine," will add to the apprehensions of other East European countries over the subordination of their interests to those of Moscow. The worst fears of Moscow's European allies undoubtedly were relieved, however, since the new treaty did not explicitly sanction the presence of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia or provide for the "joint defense" of Czechoslovakia's western frontiers.

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NATO: Differences persist within the Alliance concerning the positions on East-West questions to be taken in the communique of the ministerial meeting on 26-27 May.

The principal issue is how the Allies should react procedurally and substantively to the Warsaw Pact proposals for a Conference on European Security (CES). At the last ministerial meeting five months ago, the NATO communique turned aside Warsaw Pact proposals for an open-ended conference on European questions. It noted, however, that negotiations might be held on mutual and balanced force reductions (MBFR) of NATO and Warsaw Pact forces.

Most of the Allies now favor a stronger NATO signal on MBFR, and believe that the wording the US has proposed for the communique in May regarding MBFR and European security generally does not go far enough. West Germany wants a separate statement on MBFR to carry the Allies past their previous position, while many Allies believe that some other initiatives on detente should be taken. The UK has proposed the establishment of a standing committee to serve as a contact point between East and West.

The strongest objections to NATO initiatives regarding a CES or MBFR are now coming from France. The French believe that more progress must be evident in negotiations such as SALT and the current four-power Berlin talks before the Alliance makes any move toward a CES. France objects to an MBFR initiative because of its continuing opposition to bloc-to-bloc negotiations. [redacted]

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Israel-Lebanon: Three Arab guerrilla attacks against Israel on 6 May have invited a strong Israeli military response. The fedayeen strikes in the western and northeastern sections of the Israel-Lebanon border area resulted in the death of several Israeli civilians and soldiers, and the wounding of a number of others. Public feeling in Israel is running high, according to the US ambassador. The Beirut government has attempted to maintain some control over the guerrillas based in its territory in order to ward off Israeli countermeasures. Nevertheless, the Arab commandos have managed to carry out a steady series of small-scale attacks against Israeli border settlements.

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Arab States - Fedayeen: A major step has apparently been taken toward unifying the Palestinian resistance movement. The Unified Fedayeen Command formed in Amman last February has announced agreement on guidelines for the formation of a central committee within the framework of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The committee, which is to replace the Unified Fedayeen Command, plans to establish common political and military policies for the fedayeen. The announcement did not state whether the new body will be headed by PLO executive Yasir Arafat, who may face a political challenge from George Habbash, head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

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Honduras: Reorganization and re-equipment of the armed forces is continuing. Honduras recently acquired new mortars and howitzers, and over 300 tons of munitions were observed being trucked through the capital within the past ten days. The country's military capability has probably not been significantly increased, however. Despite Salvadoran fears, there is no evidence that Honduras is planning any aggressive action against its neighbor. The US Embassy is still unable to locate the jet fighters which Honduras reportedly obtained in March and is convinced that, if the jets are in Honduras, they are not operational. [redacted]

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Chile: The Marxist candidate in the hotly-contested three-way presidential race reportedly is bedridden after a heart attack. The commander of the Chilean police told the US Embassy on 7 May that pro-Castro Senator Salvador Allende will now withdraw from the campaign for reasons of health. He was nominated by the far left at the insistence of the influential Chilean Communist Party after a long wrangle and will be difficult to replace. If he cannot return to the campaign, Christian Democrat Ramiro Tomic's candidacy for the 4 September election will be strengthened. [redacted]

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Finland: The leader of the conservative National Coalition Party, Juha Rihtniemi, was asked by President Kekkonen on 5 May to make a second attempt to form a new government. Social Democratic Party chief Paasio earlier failed to find any common ground on which to base a coalition. Rihtniemi will approach the parties which gained or held their own in the mid-March elections, as well as either the Center or Social Democratic party. Both of these key parties have strong reservations about joining such a grouping, however, and Rihtniemi's prospects for forming a government are not good.

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Brazil: The long-delayed purchase of French Mirage supersonic jet fighters is on the point of completion, according to Foreign Minister Gibson. He told Ambassador Elbrick that he personally regretted the necessity of purchasing the French aircraft because it would adversely affect the traditional ties between the US and Brazilian military.

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Medici has given approval for the acquisition of 16 Mirages at a price of \$59 million and that an air force team is ready to go to Paris to complete the contract.

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